

Message Text

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SUBJ: JOINT THAI-LAO COMMITTEE MEETING IN BANGKOK

REF: A) FBIS BK131300Z JAN 75; B) FBIS BK130328Z JAN 75;

C) FBIS BK050612Z JAN 75; D) BANGKOK 19514; E) BANGKOK

18974

1. THE JOINT THAI-LAO (BORDER) COMMITTEE BEGAN A FIVE-DAY MEETING IN BANGKOK JANUARY 13. LAO UNDERSECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS LUAN RATCHASOMBAT AND THAI UNDERSECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS PHAEN WANNAMETHI LED THE TWO DELEGATIONS AT THE OPENING MEETING. LAO INTERIOR MINISTER PHENG PHONGSAVAN WILL ARRIVE JANUARY 14 AND THE MINISTERIAL-LEVEL MEETING BETWEEN PHENG AND THAI FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN ITSARANGKUN NA AYUTTHAYA WILL BEGIN JANUARY 16. CONTRARY TO EARLIER REPORTS (REF E) LAO FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUMI VONGVICHIT WILL NOT ATTEND THE MEETINGS.

2. A THAI FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCED JANUARY 9 THAT THE JOINT COMMITTEE WILL MEET AT FOUR SEPARATE

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"LEVELS". IN ADDITION TO THE MINISTERIAL-LEVEL MEETING

THERE WILL BE THREE SUB-COMMITTEES ON (1) TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, (2) ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND THE TRANSIT OF GOODS AND (3) SECURITY IN THE BORDER AREAS. THE UNDER-SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF BE NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD AND THE UNDERSECRETARY OF INTERIOR RESPECTIVELY WILL LEAD THE THAI MEMBERSHIP ON THE THREE SUB-COMMITTEES.

3. "THE NATION" REPORTED JANUARY 13 (REF B) THAT THAILAND WILL OFFER LAOS A TWENTY PER CENT REDUCTION IN THE TRANSIT FREIGHT RATE. THE NEWSPAPER QUOTED COMMUNICATIONS UNDER-SECRETARY SIRILAK CHANTHARANGSU AS SAYING THAT THE REDUCTION IS THAILAND'S GESTURE OF SINCEREITY TOWARD LAOS AND THAT THE RTG IS WILLING TO SUBSIDIZE THE STATE-OWNED EXPRESS TRANSPORT ORGANIZATION IF THE REDUCTION CAUSES IT FINANCIAL LOSSES.

4. AT THE OPENING MEETING, LUAN EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT THE TWO SIDES WOULD SOLVE THE TRANSIT PROBLEM. PHAEN, ON THE OTHER HAND, EMPHASIZED THAT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THE JOINT COMMITTEE HAS MET AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL -- TO COPE WITH THE LARGE NUMBER OF ISSUES.

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